

The President's Weekly Address

February 6, 2010

Even though our economy is growing again, these are still tough times for America. Too many businesses are still shuttered. Too many families can't make ends meet. And while yesterday we learned that the unemployment rate has dropped below 10 percent for the first time since summer, it's still unacceptably high, and too many Americans still can't find work.

But what we have to remember at a time like this is that we are not helpless in the face of our difficulties. As Americans, we make our own destiny. We forge our own path. And I am confident that if we come together and put aside the politics that keeps holding us back, we can do that again. We can rebuild this economy on a new, stronger foundation that leads to more jobs and greater prosperity.

I believe a key part of that foundation is America's small businesses, the places where most new jobs begin. These companies represent the essence of the American spirit, the promise that anyone can succeed in this country if you have a good idea and the determination to see it through. And every once in a while, these ideas don't just lead to a new business and new jobs, but a new American product that forever changes the world. After all, Hewlett-Packard began in a garage. Google began as a simple research project.

Government can't create these businesses, but it can give entrepreneurs the support they need to open their doors, expand, or hire more workers. And that's what we've always done in this country. The folks at Southwest Windpower in Flagstaff, Arizona, started their company in a small home. Since getting a loan from the Small Business Administration, they've sold 160,000 wind turbines to about 90 different countries and are hiring even more workers today. When Sam Ko walked into one of the SBA's small-business development centers in Illinois, he didn't have any business experience at all, just a patent for a new metal manufacturing technology. He was given a loan and a business plan, and today, his company is still growing, with offices all over the Midwest.

Last year, the steps we took supported over 47,000 loans to small businesses and delivered billions in tax relief to small-business owners, which helped companies keep their doors open, make payroll, and hire workers. But we can and must do more. That's why I've proposed a series of steps this week to support small-business owners and the jobs they create, to provide more access to credit, more incentives to hire, and more opportunities to grow and sell products all over the world.

Because financing remains difficult for good, creditworthy small businesses across the country, I've proposed that we take \$30 billion from the TARP fund originally used for Wall Street and create a new small-business lending fund that will provide capital for community banks on Main Street. These are the small, local banks that will be able to give our small-business owners more of the credit they need to stay afloat. And we should also continue to waive fees, increase guarantees, and expand the size of SBA-backed loans for small businesses. And yesterday I proposed making it easier for small-business owners to refinance their mortgages during these tough times.

To give these companies greater incentives to grow and create jobs, I've proposed a new tax credit for more than 1 million small businesses that hire new workers or raise wages, as well as the elimination of all capital gains taxes on small-business investment.

Finally, we should provide targeted support to the most innovative small businesses, the ones with the greatest potential to export new goods and products all over the world. A lot of these companies, like the wind turbine manufacturer I mentioned, are the foundation on which we can rebuild our economy to compete in the 21st century. They just need a little help securing the financing they need to get off the ground. We have every incentive to help them do that.

Next week, Congress will start debating many of these proposals. And if anyone has additional ideas to support small businesses and create jobs, I'm happy to consider them. My door is always open. But I urge members of both parties: Do not oppose good ideas just because it's good politics to do so. The proposals I've outlined are not Democratic or Republican, liberal or conservative. They are probusiness, they are progrowth, and they are projob. Leaders in both parties have supported similar ideas in the past. So let's come together and pass these measures without delay. Let's put more Americans back to work, and let's give our small-business owners the support to do what they've always done, the freedom to pursue their dreams and build our country's future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:40 p.m. on February 5 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 5 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 6. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

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